

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, May 6, 1895, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL 1331 Conn. Ave., Washington, D. C. Monday, May 5th, 1895. My darling May:

Not time tonight to write much so will simply note events.

Events to be noted: Nothing has happened! Let me see — what did I do this morning. Got up at the usual time! Read my paper — glad to note that the British have evacuated Corinto — and saluted the Nicaraguan Flag.

Have secured a Sec. — pro tour — a protege of Mary Symonds. A Miss Valiant. Met here at the Volts Bureau about 1:30 — but she had not brought her typewriter. As she is a stenographer — decided to dictate a few letters and let her typewrite afterwards — but just as we were about to begin — visitors came.

A beautiful little deaf girl of Georgetown (“Ellen Waters” I think) — and her teacher, Miss Hedrick. Had a long talk with her teacher as to her method of teaching — and before I knew it — was engaged in a lecture upon the importance of Reading — as a means of acquiring language. After departure of Miss Hedrick and her little pupil — I was just about to begin dictation again — when a message was delivered from my Mother — to the effect that dinner was ready — 8:30 P. M. I felt immediately an aching void within — and sent Miss Valiant home (by Berrin) to get her dinner and her typewriter. Spent the afternoon dictating letters — till nearly six o'clock — when I decided to send the young lady home — with instructions to return early in the morning and go to work upon typewriting her notes — so as to have them ready for my signature by one o'clock tomorrow. Just as I was dismissing her for the day — visitors were announced — who turned out to be

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Prof. Langley and Mr. Winlock showed them all over the Bureau — and had a few words concerning aero-planes and etc.,

Prof. Langley is to try his machine again in a day or two and will invite me to be present — although he seems to be somewhat skeptical concerning my presence — as he now makes his attempts at about daybreak — to avoid reporters. I told him I would sit up all night — so as to wake him in time!

Went from Bureau to Twin Oaks and dined there about seven o'clock. (I call my mother's dinner "lunch" — so this was not a second dinner in one day?) Present: Charlie, Grace, and all the children, excepting baby who refuses to be weaned, also your Uncle Theo and his wife.

After dinner your father read his paper on Russia to me — which he is to deliver next Friday. Had to break off suddenly — to make a rush for the last car — which I missed!

Walked into town. Tired out — hot — perspiry — undressed — cold sponge — cool — comfortable — sofa — delightful new book — Vol. IV of McMasters History, of the People of the United States. Must go to bed now — but thought I would jot down today's proceedings before retiring. Interest of the book — and lateness of the hour — (won't look at my watch so as to let you know) — accounts for shortness of note. Really too tired to write — but want to try at all events — to scribble off something — however 3 little — every day.

Your loving husband, Alec.

P. S. To be continued. (Tomorrow)

Your mamma had an awful time with baby today. Grace went into town and left baby to your mother. But the little fellow utterly refused to be weaned — and Grace was away.

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Your mamma had to call up Dr. Johnson by telephone — for advice in the premises — as she was afraid the baby would starve!

It is quite evident that the young man thinks more of his mamma than of anyone else in the world — He gave her such an enthusiastic welcome back — that she has hardly got over it yet! He evidently thinks that beef juice and bread crumbs — are not to be compared in delicacy of flavor with the excellent article of diet to which he has become accustomed!

Tuesday, May 7th, 1895.

At V. B. about noon — but as typewriting not finished — spent a couple of hours talking with my Father and Mother — Mary and Louisa.

Trying to make a collection of McCurdy stories and jokes suitable to be let off at the Convention at Flint. Some teachers are to be reached by reason. For them I will prepare arguments. Others will be touched by ridicule — and for them I want jokes — and fables like the “Committee on Boats.” I want specially some similes for “The Combined System.”

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My Father suggests working up Seidlitz Powders! The two powders may be administered separately to two different boys! — but how then are they “combined?” Mixed together simultaneously — you have a good deal of gas effervescence — and not a very agreeable taste when you get through. Another form of combined system reminds me of the Nova Scotia girl who, last year, dissolved one of the powders and drank it down alone — then dissolved the other and drank that too. She died in a few minutes from suffocation. Something to be worked out of this. Mary gave me some Irish Bulls — good in themselves — but not appropriate for my purpose.

An Irish orator gave utterance to the sentiment — “Single misfortunes never come alone; and the greatest of all possible misfortunes is sure to be followed by a greater one still.”

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An Irish M. P. exclaimed "Sir, if I have any partiality for the honorable gentleman it is against him."

And when he cast his vote in parliament he exclaimed "Sir — I'll answer boldly in the affirmative — NO!"

On another occasion the honorable gentleman objected to the proposed tax on leather on the ground that it would bear heavily "on the bare-footed peasantry of Ireland." Another Irishman retorted that they could avoid the tax "by making the under-leathers of wood! "

Two packages have come for you. One a box of new handkerchiefs marked "B" — The other a box from "Mrs. Charles Kendall Adams" — containing (1) a privately printed poem on fine paper — beautifully printed entitled "The Choir Visible" 5 by "Mary B. Adams" (2) Another poem similarly printed by the same author entitled "Commencement Ode." And (3) a drawing-room volume handsomely printed — and beautifully illustrated entitled "Epithalamium" by Mary Mathews Barnes with drawings by Dora Wheeler. This volume bears the following inscription in a lady's handwriting (probably the handwriting of the donor whose card "Mrs. Charles Kendall Adams" is enclosed.)

The volume bears outside the title "Wedding-hymn" by Mary Mathews Barnes — and inside the title "Epithalamium" and the inscription shows that "the author of the Wedding-hymn" (Mary Mathews Barnes) is the donor.

Inscription.

"To Mrs. Graham Bell, from the writer of a Wedding Hymn and in memory of her husband's visit to Madison in March eighteen hundred and ninty-five.

He came with his Completeness, still to help their incompleteness. Madison, Wisconsin."

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Do you know the lady? I suppose I must have met her — but do not remember her. Perhaps “Mary Mathews Barnes” and “Mrs. Charles Kendall Adams” may be the same person. That's it. One her married name — other her maiden name. Yes this accounts for smaller poems being by “Mary M. Adams.” Sherlock Holmes would say that she has not been married very long — as the “Barnes” poem bears the date of 1889. The “Adams” verses being dated 1894.

Spent one hour, 2 to 3 P. M. dictating letters to 6 Miss Valiant — and at three your father called at the Bureau. We called together on Col. Carrol D. Wright, the head of the Census office. I am to go to the Census Office tomorrow at eleven — and go over with him all the tables of the Deaf and Deaf and Dumb.

Your father and I then called on Signor Romero — and I thanked him for his courtesy and etc. Returned to V. B. signed and mailed my letters — and then took supper with Mr. Hitz at an Italian Restaurant on 14th Street.

Went to the theatre afterwards — Grand Opera — to see “Monseignor” — a sort of comic opera. Couldn't stand it. Left when it was half over and gave my admission check to Perrin.

Telegram from Mr. McCurdd says:

“Please place one hundred and fifty-six dollars at my credit with Bell and Co. account of sewing school documents. Mailed Bangs. (signed) Authur W. McCurdy.

I forward letter for “Miss M. H. Bell” from Beinn Bhreagh. And notes for you from Mrs. Hawley, Mrs. Champney and from Edwina Booth Grossmann.